

# Encouragement for Real Life Podcast

## 228 Protect What Matters Most

[00:00:00] Welcome to the Encouragement for Real Life podcast. I'm Julie Lefebure, your host. Life is remarkable, sometimes raw and always real. And some days we could use a little extra encouragement for our real lives. Here you'll find that. Along with personal life impacting stories, helpful life hacks, timely inspiration, biblical insight, and a fresh perspective.

The Encouragement for Real Life Podcast equips you to be a light in this world and to shine bright wherever God has you. I'm glad you're here today.

**Julie Lefebure:** Welcome to Encouragement for Real Life today. I am thrilled that you decided to join me here today, and we continue on in our Different Kind of December series. You know, the episodes this month can be great for any type of season, but especially we're focusing on the holiday [00:01:00] season since that's what we are in currently.

And so last week we chose a word. If you remember, we chose one word to help us stay focused on what God is doing in and around us this month. And if you didn't get a chance to do that, or if you didn't listen to last week's episode yet, you can certainly go back and do that. But I invite you to think about what would your word be for this month, and we're gonna talk about that here in a little bit.

But have you noticed as soon as we slow down and choose peace over pressure, the world seems to speed up. Not just speed up, but like quadruple speed up. The lists, the pressure, the, I don't know, the expectations. They all start to pile up. And that's why today we're talking about how to protect what matters most this season, what matters most in our lives.

Because if we don't guard our [00:02:00] hearts, our calendars, and our peace intentionally, well, December will decide our pace for us. Because what will happen is that the pace will become like the world's pace. Not like God's pace. So this is when we need to intentionally just decide what is most important and what are we gonna do about that to protect that.

So today we're gonna get practical. We're gonna get personal, and excuse me, we're gonna talk about, so sorry, what really matters this season. We're gonna

talk about what really matters, what's worth saying no to, and how we can stay close to Jesus in the middle of it all. Because that's what it's all about, right?

Friend, this is your reminder today. You don't have to do it all. Just do what matters most with Him. So if you're ready for a shot of encouragement and some hope and peace [00:03:00] today, well, let's get into this episode.

**Julie Lefebure:** Right out of the gate, we're gonna look at scripture because I think it's just the perfect place to start today. It's always good to start with scripture or with prayer, but as we look upon protecting what matters most, I think it's a great place to start today.

So let's look right away, find some hope, in Matthew chapter 6:33 and in the New International Version it reads, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." Amen.

You know that first part of that verse just sounds amazing, doesn't it? I mean, seek first his kingdom and his righteousness. Seek that first. But what about the second part of that [00:04:00] verse, it says, "and all these things will be given to you as well?" What are the quote, these things? What are these things? Well, earlier in that chapter we see how Jesus talks about, um, basically providing for our physical needs. They are our basic needs like food. He talks about food and drink and clothing. And Jesus tells us that if we seek God and His kingdom first, then everything else will come, everything else will be provided for. We will receive all that we need. This is choosing what matters most. And you know, I can't help but say and think that just the truth of that Jesus is what matters most. Everything else will come after that if we seek Him first.

And the thing is, God just doesn't ask us to choose what matters most. He also invites [00:05:00] us to guard it. And I found Proverbs chapter 4:23, also in the New International Version. And this is what it says. "Above all else, guard your heart for everything you do, flows from it." And we've talked about this scripture here on the podcast before, but this chapter of Proverbs, which most people say was written by King Solomon, is filled with just beautiful exhortations of walking in the way of wisdom.

And in preparing for this episode, I read this chapter, chapter four. I read it a number of times because I just couldn't get it to sink in. There were so many truths in there, and I, I should have probably taken the time to write it all out because it seems like when I write things down, they cement in my brain better.

But do you remember how Solomon he was given the opportunity to ask God for anything? [00:06:00] And what did he ask for? He asked for wisdom. And that very verse, Proverbs, chapter 4:23 is one of the wisest truths that we can still live by today. That is, just a powerful verse. It's not a very long verse, but it's very powerful. To guard our hearts.

Guarding our hearts is something that is intentional. '.....cause if we don't guard our hearts. That's a tongue twister for me. Um, if we don't intentionally do that, we will, we will struggle. Our hearts will, will struggle. We will struggle because of our hearts. So, when we intentionally guard them though, gosh, everything flows from that.

We're gonna talk about that in a minute. But this brought me to think about last year. Last year I, I think I did a good job of focusing on what mattered most during the Christmas season. And I think I did a pretty good [00:07:00] job of also guarding my heart. And I, I let go of traditions that just really didn't matter. I just let 'em go. And I think I just thought, why am I doing all this? If it does, if it doesn't bring me joy, why am I doing all this? And you know, at first it was kind of like a ugh, I don't really like that kind of a feeling. But then all of a sudden, immediately followed was this amazing, freeing feeling that I didn't have to stress over not baking my traditional goodies. Because number one. It takes a day or two to do it. And number two, I don't need to eat those things even though they're very good and I would only make 'em one time a year.

And then also though, I felt the joy of, of freedom in not decorating as much as I had in the past. You know, instead of putting up all the decorations that we have in our basement, I [00:08:00] focused on just the ones that I really liked, the ones that brought me joy, the ones that I thought, this looks really beautiful. It was simple and it was beautiful. And no one, our kids, nobody said, Hey, where are those other, other ornaments or those other decorations. No one mentioned them. They weren't missed.

And so I focused on what was important and what brought me joy. That's what I did last year, and I'm really trying to do that again this year. Because if it doesn't bring me joy or if it doesn't involve my family or Jesus, well then I'm not doing it.

And you know, I shared this at, during our online event last month, when we, we had the, um, event avoid these five mistakes women make daily, especially during the holidays. And I shared this, during that event that I'm protecting what matters most [00:09:00] to me. And what matters most is Jesus and my family. That's it.

Now I am also, I guess, protecting myself because that, that by protecting what matters most to me, to me, is also protecting myself. I do not want to arrive on Christmas morning, exhausted and spent and sick, and feeling like I missed the whole season altogether. Because I've talked about that before, and I, I hear from many of you that you have felt that same way in the past where you wondered where did it all go? What did you do all month besides stressing and prepping and, and, overcommitting.

And so this is it. This is the thing that when we just begin to understand that there are more important things than doing all the stuff. When we're present, when we appreciate the moments we're in, when we get to Christmas morning and we're like, yes, [00:10:00] thank you, Lord, this is it.

So staying on these two things, Jesus and my family, brings me joy and a whole lot less stress. And so I desire that for you this year. Whatever that is, that's the most important to you. You know, maybe it is making that traditional Christmas meal because it brings back fond memories of simpler times or of younger times, or whatever it might be. It might be something that that is really special to you, that really isn't special to me, but it is special to you.

So what matters most to you this season? And if we think about it, December has a gravitational pull, doesn't it? A pull towards hurry toward perfection, toward pleasing everyone, toward getting the right gift, for doing one more thing, for filling our schedules way too full. But if God gave you a [00:11:00] word for this month, last week, as we talked about, if He stirred peace or presence or joy or Jesus focus in your heart, then that's something worth protecting. That is something worth guarding. Yes. And, and, and keeping in a safe place.

So I wanna ask you some questions here today. What usually pulls you off center in December? What is it? For me, it's overcommitting. It is, uh, doing too much. Trying to think, I need to do it all. What is it for you?

Another question. Where do you tend to overextend yourself? I tend to overextend myself or I try to do too much and I, I, neglect rest and sleep. That's me. What about you?

Another one is what [00:12:00] steals your peace quickest? I think for me, the thing that steals my peace the quickest is when I don't stay present. Mm-hmm.

And what will try to compete with your word this month? What do you think that would be? What we'll try to compete with your word this month. My word

this month is presence, not P-R-E-S-E-N-T-S, but P-R-E-S-E-N-C-E, presence. And what's going to probably compete with that is, for me, not staying present. Is for me, um, being distracted and not living in the moment and not staying paying attention to what's happening right now.

What would that be for you? The world says, do more. Be here, be there, be everywhere. Impress everyone. But Jesus says, come to [00:13:00] Me, rest and walk with Me. Can you just picture Him saying that to you? It just calms my heart and it just fills my soul when I think about that, when I think about those words of Him saying, you know, come to Me, walk with Me, rest in Me.

Take a moment here with me, will you? Wherever you are, whatever you're doing, driving or walking, folding laundry, sitting with your coffee in a quiet space. Let your shoulders relax for just a second, and I'm gonna do this too. Feels good just to let my shoulders relax. And I invite you just to breathe. And just be silent.

You know our hearts weren't made for all the noise and the pressure and the hurry of this world. They were made for [00:14:00] presence, God's presence. So as we sit here and just, um, whatever we're doing, we're just breathing and we're just relaxing for a moment. We're just resting for a second. Let's revisit Proverbs 4:23 in that New International Version, again, it says, "Above all else, guard your heart for everything you do, flows from it." Everything. Your peace flows from your heart. Your joy flows from your heart. Your connections, your decisions, your conversations. They all begin in the quiet, hidden place within you.

So pause and just listen here for a moment. What is weighing on your heart this December? Is it a schedule that feels too full? [00:15:00] Could it be expectations that feel way too heavy? Uh, maybe a longing for things to be different this year? Possibly a grief or ache that rises up when you least expect it?

Friend, just name it. Just name it. You don't have to fix it. You don't have to pretend that you don't feel it. But just bring it into the light of your awareness and into the presence of Jesus. Because you know He can handle it. And now ask Him quietly, Jesus, what do You want me to protect this season? What do You want me to protect this season? Maybe you sense the word that you chose last week. Maybe you sense it stirring again. Maybe you feel Him placing peace on your heart or presence or rest [00:16:00] or joy. Maybe you feel Him nudging you to protect your mornings with Him, that one-on-one time that you get with Him. Or maybe your family time, or your health or your mental space,

or simply your own soul. Whatever rises up just trust that. Trust that He is bringing it up for a reason. And that's the voice of your shepherd. You know His voice and He knows your voice and He knows your December better than you do. He knows my December better than I do.

Protecting what matters most isn't really about building walls around what we wanna protect. No. It's about building space of protection, space for joy, space for Jesus, space for the people that you love, the people that [00:17:00] you just can't get enough of. Space for the kind of December that your heart truly needs.

So I invite you just to stay here in this quiet for one more breath and let your heart simply whisper, Lord, help me guard what You've given me. Lord, help me guard what You've given me.

A deep breath. And then when you're ready, let's get practical. Let's get practical about what this looks like in daily life. It sounds great and we can pause all, you know, as long as we want to, but what do we do? How do we walk this out? How do we carry this out in our daily lives?

So we have to start with protecting our hearts. And I am really focused on this, this season is to get in scripture before I do my social scrolling. To get into [00:18:00] scripture before I do my social scrolling. It's hard some days, but that is my, my focus because I want to have that be first in the in my day.

Another way we can protect our hearts is to choose grace over performance. It doesn't have to be perfect, doesn't have to be perfect. And our performance doesn't have to be perfect. But just resting in that grace.

And then also choosing some moments to pause just like we did just a minute ago where we just pause, we take a breath. You know, it doesn't take that long to do and it's just so good for our souls and our hearts to just pause and take a breath and just rest for a minute. Invite God in, talk to Him.

The next thing we can do is to protect our time. Now we can add in more space in our calendars. Space for just emptiness. We don't have to jam pack our calendars full, [00:19:00] and I'm really trying to, to focus on that is having space in my calendar where I don't have to go from one thing to another to another. And I invite you to do the same. And again, I have to do this with the intention of what brings me joy and what am I doing out of obligation. I wanna choose more joyful things than obligatory things.

Another one is to say, not this year, to things that just don't align with your word, with what you're trying to protect, with what matters most in your life. It's okay to say not this year. Maybe you can revisit again next year.

And another one is to, to have, um, just slow mornings or maybe one quiet evening a week. Can you just experience that? Think about it. A quiet evening or slow mornings. Maybe you wanna get up a little bit early or sleep in a little longer, depending on your schedule. Whatever that looks like for you. But, [00:20:00] you know, have some time with God before you go to bed. Just sit and light a candle. ' Snuggle with a blanket. Just have a quiet evening at home. Sometimes that's just, that is a beautiful way to protect our time.

And then we can protect our relationships. After we protect our heart and our time then the next is our relationships. And this is when we can choose connection over perfection. Connecting with people. It doesn't have to be perfect, but just connection over perfection. Where we are intentional about building relationships with others. The joy that you get from just connecting with another human being on a very personal level. This could include eye contact and real conversation. If we focus on that, you know, look at, people in the eye. Look at the person that's checking you out. That doesn't sound right. That's, um, in the checkout line. That's ringing up your groceries. That's a better way to say that.

[00:21:00] Look that person in the eye. Look your server at the restaurant in the eye. Ask their name and call them by name. I have a friend that does that. She always asks the server's name and it just blesses me because then the person just kind of lights up when, when he or she says his or her name. So have a real connection with people. Be intentional about connecting with people and conversing with them and getting to know them.

And then also putting presence over productivity. Being present. It's more important to be present than productive. And now I know, I'm one of those people that like to be productive and I feel good at the end of the day if I have everything crossed off my list. Maybe you're like me. But again, I'm choosing presence this month. I'm choosing if my, my daughter needs my help, I'm gonna go help her. I'm gonna be present with her. If my, my kids wanna gather, or my husband needs me to, to do something with him or, or to go somewhere with him, I'm gonna [00:22:00] choose presence over productivity. And that should really be the way of my life. But it hasn't been so far. But this season I'm really focused on that.

Each morning before the day gets loud, I invite you to whisper your December word to Jesus. It could be something like, Lord, help me live blank today. So for me, it would be, Lord, help me to live present today. Maybe your word is joy. Lord, help me live joyful today. Maybe your word is slow because you wanna slow down. Lord, help me to live slower today. Protecting what matters most isn't selfish. It's actually faithful. Jesus, protected what mattered most to Him and to His heavenly Father. So why can't we?

This is a different kind of December friend. It may feel different. It may look different, [00:23:00] and it's okay that it is different because we're choosing it to be different. And if you're doing it with Him then there's no better way to live this month.

Let's pause here and just, just pray for a second. A minute. Let's just, let's just pray.

Father God, I thank you for this, this time together. I thank You, Lord, that You are inviting us to protect what matters most and, and that may be different for each one of us. This month it's supposed to be a gift. I see this month as a gift. But Lord, we've, we've made it into something else. The world has made it into something else. Something commercialized and full of sales and full of deals, and full of gifts and decorating and, and, and oversteering and overcommitting and overthinking everything, Lord. You never desired it to be that way. Lord, we don't desire it to be that way, but sometimes we get caught up in the world. We get caught up in what the world does. [00:24:00] Now, all those things when we, when we decorate, and when we buy gifts, and when we do things like that, those aren't necessarily bad things. But yet Lord, we know that when they overtake our lives and pull us away from what matters most, celebrating Jesus, celebrating times with family, reconnecting with people, conversing with people, building relationships, taking care of ourselves, when those things conflict with those good things, Lord, that I, I can't help but think that You desire a, a better way for us. You desire us to live this abundant life that You came to give us. And, and all of those other things, they pull us away from this abundant life.

So Father, show us today. Show us that word that we could focus on this month. Show us today what it is You have for us that You want us to protect, that You want us to guard. And Lord, help us to guard our hearts this season. Help us to put You first in it all. Thank You for meeting us here today. [00:25:00] We love You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



First of all, I love how we can pray together. But I also wanna say too, if you haven't chosen your word yet for December, there's still time. It's not too late. You're not behind. No. Ask Jesus for the one thing that He wants to call cultivate in you this December and hold it close. You'll know what that word is. Just ask Him. What is it that You want, Jesus for me? What kind of a December do You want me to have? And a word will come if you didn't do that last week.

I hope today reminded you that protecting what matters isn't, isn't anything but sacred, isn't anything but, uh, important and isn't anything but what Jesus would want us to do. The peace, presence, and purpose that God has placed in your heart this December, [00:26:00] all of that is worth guarding. So this week, take a moment each morning and whisper your word, like I said to Jesus. Ask Him to help you live it out. One choice, one moment, even just one conversation at a time. Because this different kind of December, it isn't about perfection, is it? No. It's about walking with Him peacefully, purposefully, and fully present.

And I would love to hear your December word or how you're protecting what matters most to you this season. And you can message me on Instagram or Facebook, or through my website on my contact page at [julielefebure.com](http://julielefebure.com). Lots of ways you could reach me.

And I hope that today's episode encouraged your heart to protect what truly matters in this season, your peace, your presence, your joy, your relationships, the love that you have for , your Lord. [00:27:00] And I, I pray that it encouraged you in your walk with Jesus.

And if you're looking for encouragement and support more than just the podcast here as you navigate this, this season that you're in, I would love to invite you into my Abundant Life mentoring. I haven't mentioned it in a while, but this might be the perfect time to step into one-on-one mentoring to find clarity and confidence and practical hope for your real life today. You can learn more and you can even schedule your free connection call at the link in the show notes. You'll find it there.

And the last online event, oh my goodness, it was so fun. It was so fun. We had such a good time together. We learned a lot. We, had some great conversation during the, the time. Um, we had some questions and, and it was just, it was just really a fulfilling time, I think, for everybody in attendance. And so. We're having another one. We're having another online [00:28:00] event. Normally I host my events in person. But we're having another online event to kick off the brand new year in 2026. Are you ready? It's January 3rd at 9:00 AM Central Time. It's on a Saturday morning and it's called Coffee and Calling - Choosing

Your Word for 2026. That sounds weird, doesn't it? 2026. But here we are. If choosing a word for December has already been meaningful for you, uh, imagine what choosing a word for your whole year could do. I would love to spend an hour with you that morning as we walk into 2026 with intention and joy. And if you can't make it in person, you can catch the replay later. And, that will be available for you. Registration is already up on my website and the link is in the show notes.

And something other very exciting, if you would like to support this podcast or you want to find a [00:29:00] meaningful gift this season for someone, maybe for yourself or someone you love, I have a brand new shop on my website and I am excited, uh, just to share it. And you'll find scripture cards and encouraging resources like t-shirts and my books and thoughtful gifts to help you and those you love, that you care about to live encouraged in your everyday lives. So you can browse the shop anytime at the link in the show notes as well.

That's a lot, isn't it? A lot of stuff going on and it's exciting. But next week we continue our different kind of December series in the episode titled Be Here For It. We are going to talk about how to fully stay present in the moments that matter most to us, even in the full season, that seems to maybe feel overflowing. We're gonna learn how to just withdraw and not necessarily withdraw within us, but withdraw to be able to [00:30:00] appreciate the moment that we're in to stay present so we don't miss one single thing. It's practical, it's uplifting, and uh, I think you're really going to love it. You're gonna love that episode.

So, as always. I just thank you so much for joining me today. I am grateful for you. I am cheering you on and I am praying that this week that you feel God's peace just guarding your heart as you really protect what matters most.

So until next time, keep protecting what matters most. And remember, you're not walking this season alone. Jesus is right here with you. God bless you.

Thank you so much for joining me here today. You can find more at [julielefebure.com](http://julielefebure.com). And until next time, stay encouraged.